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NOTES ON THE GERMAN SIGNAL CORPS

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I. SOURCE

Name : GRUBE, Willi
 Rank : Oberst
 Unit : NACHRICHTENTRUPPENFUEHRER BEIM ARMEESTAB
 "BLUMENTRITT"
 Captured : 10 May 45, at REIMS (Surrender Conference)
 Interrogated: 6824 DIC (MIS), 2 Jul 45

II. PREAMBLE

This is the fifth in a series of reports by this PW on the German Signal System. For additional information, see 6824 DIC (MIS)/M. 1177, M. 1185, M. 1186, and M. 1188.

The information contained in this report was compiled in answer to a questionnaire received from the War Department, Office of the Chief Signal Officer.

Reliability: A-2

III. TRAINING ORGANIZATION IN THE GERMAN SIGNAL CORPSA. General

German Signal training can be divided into three phases. The first of these dealt with recruits who had no previous signal experience. This was handled by Signal Training and Replacement Bns (NACHRICHTEN ERSATZ UND AUSBILDUNGS BATAILLONE) under each WEHRKREIS. Here recruits for the Signal Corps were received, trained, and sent out to those field units requiring replacements.

The second phase dealt with personnel with previous signal experience, who were to be given specialist courses. Such men were mostly officer candidates, officers, and NCOs from signal units; the courses were given at the Army Signal School at HALLE.

The third phase encompassed men who were already considered specialists in their fields. These men received additional training in those fields in which needs for personnel existed. For instance, 50 Signal Replacement Bn at FLENSBURG trained men in carrier frequency and decimeter technique for newly organized Carrier Frequency and Decimeter Cos.

B. Signal Schools

The Army Signal School at HALLE was the central agency in this field. A subsidiary was located at GLATZ (SILESIA). The school was under the immediate supervision of IN 7 (INSPEKTION DER NACHRICHTENTRUPPEN, OKH).

During the last few years of the war, individual Corps and Army Hqs in the field organized their own schools for the training of communication personnel. These schools were temporary, and organized on the initiative of the various commanders. They trained signal men within infantry, artillery and armored units. Instructors were supplied upon request by the Army Signal School, but usually NCOs with the necessary ability were entrusted with the training, since this was non-technical in nature.

C. Basic Training of Enlisted Men

During peacetime, especially from 1934 to 35, training lasted about one year, if exercises and maneuvers are taken into consideration. The first three months were spent in a thorough infantry course. This included drill, tactics, and weapons training.

It gave each man the necessary general military training, and provided for the eventuality that he might be assigned to the Infantry as a telephone or radio operator. When signal training began after three months, infantry training was not completely abandoned. Personnel was trained in operation and nomenclature of signal equipment, and in procedure. Technical details were not taught; these were handled by NCOs, who were given a much more thorough and technical course.

All courses were considerably shortened during the war. Infantry training was reduced to six weeks; the entire course lasted two and a half months. Only a minimum number of subjects was taught. Specialist enlisted personnel were sent to the Army Signal School at HALLE, or to 50 Signal Replacement Bn at FLENSBURG.

PW believes that training was not conducted with much realism. Simulated combat conditions were employed only by the field units, where men might receive additional infantry training. As far as signal work was concerned, men were subjected to such conditions only during special exercises and maneuvers. On the Eastern front, the areas immediately behind the lines were employed for this, since partisan activity provided realistic conditions.

D. Training in Signal Work

1. Switchboard Operators

Men who spoke clearly and without a strong local accent were trained as switchboard operators immediately after their basic course. Security and discipline lectures and a course in switchboard procedure were given. If an operator was to be assigned to an Army or Army Group switchboard, he usually attended a special course. This was necessary, since installations were much larger at these headquarters, and there was a greater volume of traffic. Such courses were given by the Telephone Operator Cos of Army or Army Group Signal Regiment. Emphasis was placed on courtesy.

In these courses, electrical details were explained only in a very sketchy fashion, since operators were not permitted to repair sets.

2. Code Clerks

Code clerks, assigned to the radio station of each headquarters, were trained in the operation of various field code devices and procedures during and after their basic training in their Replacement Bns. This training included use of the ENIGMA code machine and other devices. Only the operation was taught, and the course lasted from one to two months. There were no special schools for such work, PW believes.

3. Teletype Operators

Former typists and clerks were selected for this work, and trained during their basic training course in the Replacement Bn. A special secret course was conducted at the Army Signal School for operators of the secret teletypewriters LORENZ G and SIEMENS G.

Technical details were not taught. Courses were limited to the proper operation of the equipment.

4. Repair Personnel

In peacetime, courses for repairmen were held at the Army Signal School. Men with previous experience were selected for this instruction. After graduating from the course, they were qualified as FUNKMEISTER, and put in charge of the repair shop in a Signal Co. They were assigned two or three assistants, usually men who had been electricians or mechanics in

tion of the Technical Inspectors attached to each Bn Staff. Such shops were usually staffed with civilian employees of the firms which supplied the Army with signal equipment. These men also acted as instructors, giving practical courses to the military personnel assigned to them as helpers. The civilians were supervised by the NACHRICHTEN ZEUGAMT (Signal Equipment Office), BERLIN/SCHOENEBERG, NAUMANNSTRASSE.

During the war, almost all civilians under the Signal Equipment Office were inducted into the Army. The repair staffs were considerably enlarged, since much new and specialized equipment was introduced. Schools for repair personnel were organized at Division and Corps Signal Bns, and at Army Signal Depots and repair stations. Instructors were the experienced repair men, who taught recruits with previous signal experience.

In Carrier Frequency and Decimeter Cos and other special units, only SPEZIAL-MECHANIKER (Special Mechanics) were permitted to make repairs. These were trained at 50 Signal Replacement Bn, or at the factory which made the equipment. The REICHSPPOST also conducted courses for mechanics, and in addition many REICHSPPOST employees were drafted, because their special knowledge was of great use to the Army.

Men familiar with cable work were urgently needed after the German Army had occupied most of EUROPE. A two and a half month course for repair men in this field was conducted at 50 Signal Replacement Bn. Former employees of the cable industry and the REICHSPPOST were the students, and later the instructors.

Radar repair personnel were trained by the Air Force, at the Air Force Signal Training Regt in KOETHEN, and the Air Force Signal School. Courses lasted three months, and students were selected from the radar industry. After graduation, they were organized into I-TRUPPS (INSTANDSETZUNGS TRUPPS - Maintenance Sections), and assigned to radar sites upon request. Each site had one Wachtmeister, who was permitted to perform first and second echelon repairs. More complicated work was done by the I-TRUPPS.

5. Supply Personnel

The supply of signal equipment was directed by the Signal Equipment Office (see para 4 above). Its subsidiaries, HEIMAT ZEUGAMTER (Home Equipment Offices), were distributed throughout GERMANY. In addition, NACHRICHTENPARKS (Signal Supply Depots) were attached to each Army and Army Group. The Signal Equipment Office had no jurisdiction over these.

The Air Force had a similar organization, with a LUFT-NACHRICHTEN ZEUGAMT (Air Force Signal Equipment Office), BERLIN/TELTOW, and subsidiaries. Air Force signal equipment, however, was furnished to the units directly from the manufacturers, to eliminate paper work and speed up delivery.

Both civilian and military specialists were employed in the supply systems of both branches. They were trained as supervisors in one equipment specialty at the Signal School, in a course nine months in duration. FUNKMEISTER or OBERFUNKMEISTER with ability might be advanced to the position of Technical Inspector, after completing another course at the Signal School or at 50 Signal Replacement Bn, which lasted from nine to twelve months.

6. Monitor and Code Personnel

During peacetime, monitor personnel was trained in the Radio Monitor Co of each WEHRKREIS; during the war, at the Army Signal School. A thorough language test was given before entrance into the school. Men admitted were usually well-travelled, with a good intellectual background.

Code personnel were trained by the CHIFFRIER ABTEILUNG DES

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7. Study of Allied Signal Methods

Allied methods of communication were emphasized after the outbreak of war, especially in the Air Force. Until that time, not much work had been done in this field. PW states that Major SCHNIPPERING (last seen at PWE 15, COMPIEGNE), was in charge of this research, and supervised the distribution of all information to the troops in the field.

E. Training of Officers

1. Pre-War

The Army Signal School at HALLE also conducted a course for officer candidates. Emphasis was evenly divided between technical and military subjects. Much time was spent in teaching the future officer the rules and regulations governing the German Officer Corps, discipline, a sense of duty, honor, patriotism, and military leadership. The Division Signal Bn was the basis for all tactical training. Platoon and company tactics were emphasized.

The part of the course devoted to technical training was enlarged shortly before the war began; this was necessitated by the increased amount of technical equipment allotted to signal battalions, and the activation of more specialized units. Special officer candidate courses were introduced by OKH/PRUEF 7 to train selected men for Army and Army Group Signal Regiments.

Frequently, officers from other branches were transferred to the Signal Corps, either upon application or if it was found that the officer possessed qualifications for signal work. Such officers were sent to an officer's course at the Army Signal School.

Two or three officers were sent to technical schools (TECHNISCHE HOCHSCHULEN) each year to obtain engineer's degrees. After completion of these four-year courses, they were sent to the signal sections of the OKH or OKW, where such technical knowledge was necessary. This procedure was not followed in the Air Force.

2. Wartime

The training of signal officers changed in only two respects during the first two years of the war. Courses were generally shortened, to increase output. Special technical courses were increased in scope, to meet demands created by the activation of many new special units.

Orientation courses were organized at the Army Signal School, to bring the knowledge of reserve officers called to active service up to date.

A shortage of unit commanders was relieved by creating courses for company, battalion, and regimental commanders. Officers were assigned to those courses in accordance with their rank and possibilities of future promotion.

The Air Force had a similar system. Radar, with its constant growth and new developments, offered a special problem. To alleviate this, officers were sent directly to the manufacturing industries for training. Later, courses were organized at the Air Force Signal Training Regiment, the Signal School at HALLE, and in existing radar units. PW states that Generalmajor BOHNER, last seen at the Surrender Conference in REIMS in May 45, and Major SCHIPPERING (see para D, ¶ above), can offer additional information on this subject.

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F. Officer Candidates

Selection and training of officer candidates varied in accordance with the field to which the prospective officer was to be assigned. The following, for example, was the procedure followed with men intended for the FUEHRUNGS NACHRICHTEN REGIMENTIER.

Candidates were selected by their commanders after they had proved themselves in combat, or in outstanding work in their specialty. A favorable report had to be made on any such achievements, decorations, promotions, educational background, personality, military bearing, and technical ability. All EM were eligible. After selection, they were given a four week course in tactics, Army regulations, customs, and technical subjects, which was conducted in the unit. If this course was successfully completed, candidates were sent to another four-week course at the FUEHRUNGS-NACHRICHTEN-TRUPPEN SCHULE, OKH. Here the weeding-out process began.

Then followed a three-month probation period, during which men were put in charge of squads in Signal battalions in the field. A number of the men, now officially designated as OFFIZIERS-ANWAERTER (Officer Candidates), were lost in action during this period.

The final three months of training were conducted at the Signal Schools in HALLE or LEIPZIG, and culminated in promotion to Leutnant. Men who did not pass this course satisfactorily were sent to a field unit for another three-month period before being commissioned.

Newly commissioned officers were usually sent back to the unit with which they had served as enlisted men. It was felt that this would increase morale and efficiency in the unit, since the men could see that faithful and skilled service was rewarded.

Exceptions to this process in the FUEHRUNGS NACHRICHTEN REGIMENTIER were men at least 30 years old, with the rank of Wachtmeister or above. Deserving men in this category might receive direct commissions. These were then handled by the Personnel Department of the OKH.

IV. PERSONALITIES

Note: The following men may be of value in obtaining additional information on signal equipment supply and nomenclature, on which PW could offer little information (see para D, 5 above; and 6824 DIC (MIS)/M. 1188, para VI). Dates of birth and heights are approximate.

BENTHIN, Max

Head of the Telephone Section in OKH/WA PRUEF 7. Last seen in Mar 45 at Hq Army Group South.

Born : 1895	Face: Long, thin
Height: 1.75 meters	Eyes: Wears glasses for reading
Figure: Very thin	

FIEGL

Assistant to HOFFLER (see below). Expert on equipment nomenclature. Probably captured with HOFFLER near Hq Army Group South.

Born : 1905	Face: Square
Height: 1.70 meters	Speech: Bavarian dialect, deep voice
Figure: Heavy-set, short neck	

HOEFFLER, Heinrich

Oberst in charge of the Nomenclature Section of IN 7. Expert on

Born : 1898
 Height: 1.70 meters
 Figure: Thin

Face: Thin, bony
 Hair: Gray
 Eyes: Wears glasses

KARBERG

Assistant to BENTHIN (see above). Formerly Wachtmeister in 2 Sig Bn, STETTIN. Captured while on a mission to PARIS shortly before its liberation. Wore a Feldwebel's uniform when captured.

Born : 1905
 Height: 1.75 meters
 Figure: Stocky

Face: Oval
 Hair: Thinning

ZEIDLER

Civilian in charge of the Telephone Section in OKH/WA PRUEF 7. Sent to Hq Army Group South in Mar 45, and probably captured there.

Born : 1895
 Height: 1.65 meters
 Figure: Fat

Face: Round
 Hair: Bald
 Eyes: Wears glasses

ZJH (Ed: UEL)

For the Commanding Officer:

Robert E. Berger
 ROBERT E. BERGER,
 Captain, Infantry,
 Army Section

5 July 1945

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